

Public Involvement Plan Proposed Scope of Work – FY 2002-2003

May 15, 2001
(Rev. 10/4/2001)

Project No.: PIP 12K (C-9, GPBO, TPBO)

Lead Agencies: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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Title of proposal: Coordinate public involvement during development and implementation of management plans and programmatic biological opinions for the Yampa River Basin, Gunnison River Basin, and other tributary basins.

Goal: The ultimate goal of this project is to develop and implement management plans for significant tributaries of the Upper Colorado River Basin. The purpose of these management plans is to provide and/or protect instream flows and other habitat needed to maintain and recover the endangered fishes while allowing for water to be depleted for existing and future human needs. Each plan serves as the basis for development of a Programmatic Biological Opinion (PBO) for each of the tributary basins. This public involvement plan (PIP) is intended to engage stakeholders in the planning process for the purpose of identifying and focusing significant issues for consideration in formulating and evaluating alternative actions. This PIP has the following objectives:

- To effectively engage the public in the planning process by providing an avenue for local involvement in developing each basinwide management plan and PBO.
- To enhance an appreciation by the public and key stakeholders for the uniqueness of their basin, its value to the endangered fish and other native species.
- To enhance the image of the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Recovery Program as credible entities in the eyes of the public and key stakeholders.
- To increase support within water-user, scientific and environmental communities to effectively implement the management plans.

Strategies/Dates:**General:**

- Actively and fully participate in the development of management plans, including compliance with ESA and NEPA requirements, if applicable. Provide a forum and host meetings where issues related to management plans can be discussed (ongoing).
- Disseminate and/or present information about the Recovery Program to affected interest groups and stakeholders. Write and/or disseminate news releases, newsletter articles, op-ed pieces and letters to the editor on the purpose, activities, accomplishments and status of basinwide planning processes, including NEPA/ESA compliance (ongoing).
- Investigate opportunities to educate school children about the local riverine ecosystem and its importance to the endangered fish through the River Watch program, Project WILD, the Nature Conservancy's Carpenter Ranch, or other existing programs (ongoing).
- Conduct public meetings to provide information to and obtain input from the public. Incorporate public input when formulating and evaluating alternative actions (ongoing).
- Attend relevant meetings of county commissioners, city councils, water conservancy districts, and other stakeholder groups. Report on the status of planning processes and identify concerns. Address concerns in a timely and straightforward manner (ongoing).

Specific:**Yampa River Basin**

- Work with local stakeholders to formulate a management plan and PBO for the Yampa River Basin (ongoing).
- Issue a draft management plan for the Yampa River and initiate the NEPA scoping process (October – November 2001).
- Prepare and issue draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the management plan, considering public scoping input (November 2001 – March 2002).
- Prepare a Biological Assessment (BA) and submit to FWS with request to initiate formal ESA §7 consultation (October 2001 – December 2001).
- Prepare and issue a final EA for the plan following a 30-day public comment period (April– May 2002).
- Coordinate with FWS to develop PBO; submit draft PBO for review (January-March 2002).
- Finalize PBO; execute Cooperative Agreement to implement plan (April - June 2002).

Gunnison River Basin

- Work with local stakeholders to formulate a management plan and PBO for the Gunnison River Basin (April – September 2003 pending resolution of water demand and reserve water rights issues).
- Issue a draft management plan for the Gunnison River (September 2003 pending completion of Aspinall Unit modeling).
- Public comment period/public meetings (October 2003 pending completion of plan)
- Prepare a Biological Assessment (BA) and submit to FWS with request to initiate formal ESA §7 consultation (October – December 2003 pending completion of plan).
- Coordinate with FWS to develop PBO; submit draft PBO for review (January – April 2004).
- Finalize Gunnison management plan and PBO; develop and execute MOU among FWS, USBR, Colorado, others (NPS, WAPA, USFS and/or BLM) as appropriate (May – July 2004).

Tributary Basins

- Work with local stakeholders to estimate water depletions, formulate management plan(s), and develop PBO(s) for tributary basins (ongoing).
- Issue a draft tributary management plan (October – March 2003).
- Public comment period/public meetings (April – May 2003)
- Determine NEPA and ESA requirements; prepare draft EA; prepare Biological Assessment; submit to FWS with request to initiate formal ESA §7 consultation (May – September 2003).
- Coordinate with FWS to develop PBO; submit draft PBO for review (October 2003 – January 2004).
- Prepare and issue a final EA for the plan following a 30-day public comment period (October 2003 – January 2004).
- Finalize tributary management plan and PBO; develop and execute MOU between FWS, Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, USBR and others as appropriate to implement plan (February – April 2004).

FY 2002–2003**Budget:**

<u>Item</u>	<u>Cost</u>	
Salary/travel	\$ 0	(see Program Management)
Advertising	\$1000	
Public meetings	\$ 0	(See PIP-12)
Printing and copying	<u>\$1000</u>	
Total	\$2000	